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THE OPEN GATE OF DREAMLAND.

CAN a mesmerized "subject" be made unconsciously to commit murder, arson, burglarly and other crimes ?

This is the grave question which has been brought into prominence by recent experiments in Europe, and which is so important to the welfare of society that students of psychical phenomena should take no rest till it is answered.

Since early school days I have been interested in the occult—in those mental phenomena and states, concerning which so little is known that they are regarded as mysterious. My attention has always been sharply arrested by the alleged causes of aphasia and heterophemy; by the marvels of clairvoyance and unconscious cerebration; by the various definitions of the Nirvana of the Hindoos; by the curious effects of hasheesh, nitrous oxide, and opium ; by somnambulism and by that creative and rhythmic sleep in which Coleridge said he composed the weird poem, beginning :

" In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree,
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man,
Down to a sunless sea."

For thirty years I visited every traveling mesmerist that came along, and marveled at his experiments. After observing them under scientific conditions, and carefully eliminating Beard's "nine sources of error," I became quite certain of their genuineness, and a year or two ago began to practice upon such sensitive people as I could induce to submit to manipulations.

I did as I had seen mesmerizers do : sequestered the person as completely as possible from conversation, laughter, and the company of others ; asked him to sit at perfect ease, and to close his eyes and keep them closed for some minutes. I touched his forehead with gentle pressure, then told him firmly that he could not

open his eyes, necessarily accompanying that assurance with a strong desire that he should keep them closed.

The first success in mesmerism (or hypnotism, if the reader prefer the Greek synonym), surprised me greatly, because it did not appear that the small cause was at all adequate to the tremendous result. There was before me a sturdy man apparently helpless, apparently subject in all things to my direction and caprice, apparently unconscious of his surroundings, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, knowing nothing, not even his powerlessness in the presence of a dominant mood and purpose. There was no collusion ; for I had never seen the man or he me till five minutes before. I did not know his nativity or his name, or where he lived or anything about him. I had not even been aware of "bringing my will to bear on him" in any sense other than that in which we employ it to second and enforce any desire. Yet there he sat, apparently deprived of all ability to lift his hand without my permission ; and I experimented with him till I proved that the appearance was a reality, and that he was absolutely subject to my suggestion.

Right here let me say that this influence over him was cumulative and progressive. At first he was only passively responsive. I could keep him still but could not make him move. I could close his eyes, fasten his clenched hands together, prohibit his rising, prevent his speaking, and control all his muscles, but for a time could not subject him to active hallucinations through his senses.

I had mesmerized him two or three times before, becoming perfectly subjective, he entered the open gate of dreamland and saw and heard imaginary voices and sights to which I called his attention. Since that time I have similarly experimented on some dozens of ladies and gentlemen successfully, though in two or three instances I have been able only to control their muscles, and have totally failed to subvert their senses or their consciousness.

It is sometimes a long step from the loss of power over the weak and fluttering eyelid and that ludicrous loss of perception in which a roll of paper becomes a dagger, a glove becomes alternately a bird and a snake, and a broom becomes a banjo.

The various stages of mesmeric control seem to follow each other somewhat in this way: first, bewilderment and doubt; second, muscular obedience—and up to this point the responsive

is wholly or partially conscious of his identity and surroundings; third, lethargy or tendency to sleep; fourth, surrender of the senses and loss of identity; fifth, catalepsy; sixth, complete hallucination or waking dream.

The word "responsive" is used by me as a noun to designate a person who has been placed under mesmeric control—the usual word "subject" meaning too much, and being often offensive; and the word "sensitive" meaning too little, as thousands are very sensitive and susceptible to all nervous and intellectual influences who are apparently not mesmerizable.

When the Editor of the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW asked me to narrate in these pages my experiences as an amateur mesmerist, I shrunk from accepting the invitation on account of an imperfect comprehension of the causes and relations of the phenomena I had observed.

But when I reflected that mesmerism, by most minds, is still assigned to the domain of the supernatural; when I realized that the slight and fragmentary contributions of Braid, Charcot, Obersteiner, Beard, Hammond and Carpenter were so valuable and important that they had laid the foundation of a true mental philosophy; and when I glanced at the multitudinous books written on the subject, both of those who had and those who had not personal experience with mesmerism, and marked the audacious alacrity with which Campili in Italy; Gilert, La Tourette and Deleuze in France; and Bovee Dods, Durant and Gregory in England and America, had derived facts from dreams and dogmas from guesses, it seemed that a plain narrative of my observations might possibly be of service.

This inference was strengthened by the eager interest recently shown by intellectual people. The *soirées hypnotiques* in Washington have been attended and actively participated in by Secretaries Vilas and Whitney, Postmaster-General Dickinson, Gen. John C. Black, Gov. N. J. Colman, Senators Ingalls, Platt, Palmer, Jones, Spooner, Morgan and Harris, by admirals, military men, congressmen, supreme judges and authors, ladies and gentlemen who desire to know the latest word that concerns the problems of mind and the development of the race.

Besides this, the Philosophical Society of that city, the most important in the United States, I believe, has held several meetings for the investigation and elucidation of this subject, and

shown a disposition to follow up discussion with original research. I am not a physician, and yet I entertain myself and friends with mesmerism ; and I submit that the proclamation of Dr. Charcot, from his chair in the Salpêtrière, Paris, that every laic mesmerizer ought to be prohibited by law from " meddling with this dangerous power," is somewhat cooler than Nova Zembla, in view of the fact that a great layman, Mesmer, first brought it to the attention of mankind, and was hooted, derided, persecuted, robbed, and driven into exile and poverty by the bigoted guild of which Dr. Charcot is so illustrious a member. This is a prohibition that will not prohibit.

In this article I ignore what may be called the mystic side of mesmerism. Of that I know nothing. Of the alleged " magnetic fluid," or sublimated effluence which Mesmer, Deleuze, and most mesmerists have believed in as an agency necessary to effect their purpose ; the presence of Gregory's " odyllic light " ; of the potency of the magnet ; of clairvoyance, enabling the responsive to read books he cannot see and describe scenes he has never visited ; of Fechner's " material soul " ; of thought-transference, enabling the operator to convey his ideas to the mind of the responsive by a mere effort of the will ; of the transfer of disease to the mesmerizer ; of Dods' theory of " negative blood and positive lungs " ; of the power of the magnetic tub and the shining button ; of Durant's " polarity of man " and the transposition of molecules ; of these mysterious influences and occurrences I have no knowledge. My own experiments have not revealed any of them, and, failing to do so, have suggested that they may all be delusions arising from the practice of the deductive rather than the inductive method.

Mesmerism, like natural sleep, is a state of being thrown out of harmony with environments. It is thus akin to lunacy. Every man is mesmerized once a day—self-mesmerized when he goes to sleep—but the hallucinations are not usually expressed, much less acted out with dramatic intensity, as in this curious imposed trance. Many believe that mesmerism has its source in spiritualism, and that the entranced person actually sees the forms and hears the voices of departed human beings. I have never had the least evidence tending to justify any such conclusion. There seems to be nothing in hypnotic hallucinations showing whether man is an angel or a clod, whether he is an in-

destructible soul waiting for release from his cage to soar like a bird to the stars and live forever, or merely the transitory crown of earth's fauna, struggling with the hopeless problems of his destiny between ice-age and ice-age.

Mesmerism is always the result of suggestion, and is never effected in any other way. If I face a responsive to the wall I can have no effect upon him unless I speak to him. If he is beyond my reach I cannot affect him at all without communicating with him. I believe it is exactly true to say that no wish of a mesmerist ever effected a responsive until that wish was conveyed to him through the senses. Mesmerism is the result of expectant attention. No concentration of the mesmerizer's will without the knowledge of the responsive is followed by any result. Dr. Gilert, in France, has written a good deal and told many marvelous stories about "*sommeil à distance*," but I have never been able to obtain any such results under the most favorable conditions. I have mesmerized a good many without touching them, by merely waving my hand, or speaking to them, and I have several times put absent responsives into a sound sleep by writing or telegraphing to them that they would fall into a mesmeric sleep at a certain hour, and this has happened sometimes to their inconvenience. But the sleep was the result of a conspiracy between expectation and acquiescence. If they had not known what I wished, I might have sat in my library and wished till the next century without any response whatever.

For the benefit of those who may desire to experiment, here are certain conclusions derived from my own observations :

I. About one person in ten can be easily mesmerized. There are no known rules by which to pick out this mesmerizable person in advance, as eligibility extends almost impartially to both sexes and all ages, to blondes and brunettes, and people of all temperaments, to rich and poor, to learned and unlettered, and, it may be added, to obstinate and docile. Professor Carpenter, a most successful expert, thinks that employés are a little more tractable than employers, and those under twenty than those over twenty; but his conclusion may have resulted from the obvious fact that young employés would be more likely to respond to an invitation from the manipulator to "come forward" than would those of a higher social position, who might see in it a sacrifice of dignity or a loss of consideration.

II. The proportion of people who have the "power" to mesmerize, if it be a power, is still more problematical: But it seems to me what might be called a biological axiom, that no human being possesses any quality different in kind from that possessed, in various degrees, by all other human beings.

III. Mesmerism is a trance, artificially produced, and it appears almost identical with somnambulism, or active sleep.

IV. This artificial sleep, if unaccompanied by exciting episodes, is as harmless as natural sleep. My responsiveness occasionally come to me in the daytime to be put to sleep for the purpose of obtaining needed rest.

V. If a mesmerized person be left to himself, the mesmeric sleep will, in the course of a few hours, pass into normal sleep, from which he will, in due time, awake refreshed.

VI. Hallucinations that take place under mesmerism are seldom remembered in a subsequent waking state, but they are generally recalled vividly in a subsequent mesmeric state.

VII. The exception to this is that exciting scenes into which responsiveness are thrown are often recalled after they are awakened. Imaginary shipwrecks and conflagrations are generally thus recalled; and a young lady who, while in a mesmeric trance, was taken where she could scrape up her handkerchief full of imaginary diamonds, sighed deeply on coming to herself, and exclaimed: "Ah! where are the splendid diamonds?"

VIII. Somnambulists are apt to be mesmerizable, and, among responsiveness, I find those who usually remember their dreams in the morning also recall a larger proportion of trance experiences than those who habitually forget their dreams.

IX. Mesmerized sensitives do not see any of the objects or people in the room except the operator, or hear anything except his voice. They can be made apparently cognizant of their surroundings only by having their attention explicitly called to them by the operator. Even then they generally see imaginary objects only. Their eyes are open and their sight appears to an oculist entirely normal, but there is no co-ordination of the faculties. If I introduce "a gentleman," they treat him as such; if I introduce him as "a young person," they wonder whether he is a boy or a girl, and are liable to address him as either.

X. It is conceivable that mesmerism might injure an invalid. If he have heart disease, for instance, an exciting or violent ep-

isode, a rapture of joy or a convulsion of great grief or fear, might prove injurious or even fatal, just as it might in his normal condition.

XI. This possibility is abundantly offset by the value of mesmerism as a therapeutic agent. The responsive can be made so intoxicated on water, which he has been told is whisky, as to exhibit all symptoms of extreme inebriety; can be made disgustingly seasick by being told that he is at sea in a storm; and can be at once physically affected by any imaginary medicine. His temperature can be changed, his eye dilated, and his pulse quickened. Mesmerism is as perfect an anæsthetic as ether, and as harmless as water. Any mesmerized person can at once, by a single stroke of the hand, be rendered totally insensible to pain, and can have a tooth drawn, a cataract removed, a cancer cut out, or an arm cut off without feeling the slightest pain. This has been so often demonstrated that amputations frequently take place under its influence in the Paris hospitals, and it is successfully employed in obstetrics. Though only a fraction of patients will be found eligible as candidates for this annihilator of pain, its utility is so obvious it cannot be long before medical societies will take up the therapeusis of mesmerism as a serious study, and army surgeons will be required to have as practical a knowledge of it as of any part of the pharmacopæia.

XII. It is quite erroneous to suppose that the conduct of the responsive is directed in detail by the operator. He only suggests the general line of thought, and each responsive pursues it according to his own knowledge, experience or prejudices. I say to my responsives, for instance, that I have a wonderful educated cow with seven heads. They all want to see it. I call their attention to the imaginary stable-door near by; they look towards it, and, when I snap my fingers, they all see a seven-headed cow enter. Now, by questioning them, it becomes obvious that they all see a different cow. Unless I have designated her color, one sees a white cow, another a red cow, and so on.

Then I tell them that she can dance—can waltz and keep time with music. I hand one a cane telling him it is a flute and that he is an eminent performer, and he goes through the motions of playing to the dancing cow. They all hear different tunes, but the exhibition is satisfactory. I now add that the cow can sing—can sing a different part with each mouth—can sing

seven ballads at once. At this point there is perhaps some incredulity expressed. They see the cow stand up on her hind legs and hear the seven ballads—and this, I may as well add, is the narrative of an actual experiment.

Five of the six mesmerized persons believed that she sang. “She is singing ‘Tit Willow,’” said one. “And ‘A Warrior Bold,’” said another.

“I hear singing,” said the incredulous one turning to me. “‘Annie Laurie,’ isn’t it? How do you work her?—the machinery, I mean?”

The others laughed at him. “Why, the cow sings,” said a young lady. “Can’t you hear her sing? Can’t you see her sing?”

“She looks as if she sang,” conceded Incredulous. “I see her mouths move all around. She sounds as if she sang; but she doesn’t sing. Cows don’t sing.”

“Very well, what is it then?” asked one of the others.

“A tube and a hole in the floor,” said Incredulous, “or perhaps ventriloquism.”

“Aw!” exclaimed the first, derisively, “ventriloquism does not work like that. I’ve made a study of ventriloquism.”

“Well, I’ve made a study of Cow!” persisted the scoffer obstinately.

Sometimes I turn the responsives into children, and have them play school with infinite fun; sometimes transport them over ocean to Africa or Japan on the enchanted carpet, where for a brief space they enjoy all the delights of travel; sometimes we participate in battles, in political campaigns, in exciting tirade, and sometimes Socrates, Moses, or Confucius is introduced and interviewed, the intelligent responsive furnishing both questions and answers in a curious dual action of the mind that is highly entertaining.

Not only the reason sometimes rebels as above, but the conscience also.

As a rule responsives can be completely dominated and made to do anything of which they are physically capable. They could generally be induced to take poison, or jump off the house, or throw themselves under a locomotive, or attack one another with deadly weapons. But there are some exceptions. I was unable to overcome the fear of one of my responsives, whom I sent to

assault an imaginary Indian in the Park. He refused to go, and said it was "difficult to kill an Indian."

A young lady, one of the brightest sensitives I have ever seen, steadfastly refuses to play cards. I tell her she is Buffalo Bill and easily induce her to assume his character, but when cards are suggested, "No, I never play cards. It is wrong!" she says, and I cannot move her. I could make her jump out through the window or put her hand in the fire, but play cards she will not. I was puzzled by it till inquiring, I ascertained that her religious parents had brought her up very strictly, and taught her it was "wicked to play cards."

And this brings us to the question much mooted of late, whether crime can be committed by the aid of mesmerism. If so, it is brought into relations, not only with medicine, but with jurisprudence—not only with the *pharmacopœia* but the penitentiary. It is obvious that, if cases of this kind occur, the one to whom punishment must be dealt out is the mesmerist.

I have no doubt that crimes of a certain sort can be thus committed. It is obvious that sexual offenses could easily take place without the acquiescence or conscious concurrence of the responsive; and it is alleged that aggressions of this kind have attracted the attention of the authorities in France. Crimes against life and property by the agency of the responsives, being more complicated, would be more difficult and proportionately less frequent. Deep interest has been challenged by the allegation that a young girl in Paris, whose lover had become tired of her, was mesmerized by him and sent twenty-five miles away on the cars and there, influenced by his previously communicated suggestion, induced to commit suicide with a pistol. If such a power exists it is indeed not only startling, but greatly alarming. The question is, does it exist? Did it exist and operate in this instance, or did the suicide result from some other prompting; for instance, the knowledge of the girl that her lover wished that she was dead.

It would be easy to mesmerize a lady and send her into a cage of lions with their trainer, as was done in Paris, but, as the lions would not be mesmerized, and would therefore seem liable to attack her, it would be a cruel and dangerous thing to do.

As to the young lady's suicide under such prompting, I doubt it. The act implies a coherence of thought and continuity of

motive that mesmerized sensations do not seem to possess. I could probably induce any one of my responsives to take his life in my presence, or to assault anybody within reach, but the mind wanders curiously in this strange condition, and generally takes little cognizance of surrounding objects. I have used the word "probably" in this sentence because the conduct of mesmerized persons cannot be positively predicted. The mental impression may not, in a given case, be sufficiently vivid and dominating to induce action, or the intention may be counteracted by the trained moral sense asserting itself and overbalancing the confused hypnotic tendency.

I have had a notary public administer an oath to some of the ladies and gentlemen whom I mesmerized, and they committed perjury without hesitation. I have had some of them assault imaginary persons in the street and set fire to imaginary dwellings. But if I had sent them to commit a real assault or real arson, the chances are that both would have been unsuccessful attempts.

One evening I told one of my most alert responsives to go and rob the house immediately adjoining mine—opening, indeed, upon the same lawn. I told him it was daylight and all the people were away; that the door was unlocked and a great pile of gold lay in the middle of the second floor front; and I described the hall and stairway. He entered with apparent zest into the scheme, and taking an imaginary bag which I handed him, started to commit the crime. But, though his eyes were open, he walked straight against the wall of the drawing room without seeing it. I gave him new direction and he walked into the bay-window and would have walked through it, had I not stopped him. I led him to the door, where he went out and fell down the steps. He did not find the next house at all.

He saw nothing but his ideal realm—the world of transient hallucinations in which he dwelt. A mesmerized person cannot usually see even a chair to sit in unless his attention is especially called to it. He sees nobody and nothing but the mesmerist and the other mesmerized persons with whom he is *en rapport*. He is in a state of somnambulistic coma, and his fancies are insane delusions bearing no relation to the actual things around. Mesmerized sensitives are bewildered and helpless when away from the mesmerizer, and I have seldom seen one who was sufficiently

self-controlled to go even one hundred feet away from me and do anything that he was told to do.

One evening at a reception, a curious thing happened. I transported a young man and two ladies to Paris on the magic carpet, and left them enjoying and commenting on the pictures in the Louvre while I turned aside to superintend a personation of the President by another. When I returned to the tourists they had absolutely forgotten me, and I could not in any way make my presence known to them. They did not see my face or hear my voice, but continued their absorbed enjoyment of the great art galleries. I was compelled to unmesmerize them and start again from the beginning.

This same young man proved an expert penman. I filled out a check on the Lincoln Bank of New York City with the sum of \$100,000, and then, producing a genuine signature of Cornelius Vanderbilt, I induced him to imitate it with great accuracy in a signature at the bottom of the check, my arrangement with him being that he should have one-half of it when collected. I suggested that I would collect it and then rejoin him; but he was too shrewd and suspicious for that, and insisted on accompanying me to the imaginary bank, informing me, with more than the unction of Sairey Gamp, that he would "knock my head off" if I did not "divvy square." I do not see why a depredating mesmerist might not thus make use of an innocent accessory to complete a felony.

At another reception I was more successful in the matter of burglary. I made private arrangements beforehand with a neighbor half a block off, who concealed a plethoric pocket-book in a bureau drawer upstairs, then locked the bureau, the room and the house, and brought me the three keys. When I had mesmerized my agent I told him he was the famous robber, Dick Turpin, and that I had a job for him. I called his attention to the fact that he was on the earth and must look out where he stepped. I told him where the house was, and described it minutely. I made a diagram of the interior, of the stairs, the room, and the bureau, gave him the keys, and introduced to him a "pal" who would keep watch. He asked if there were any dogs. I reassured him on this point, gave him an imaginary revolver, and started him off. I requested some gentlemen to follow him, to see that no harm befell him, among whom were General Greely, Senator Kenna, and W. E. Curtis, the well-known journalist.

He went to the house, skirmished slyly about it, and finally unlocked the door, groped his way up the front stairs, unlocked the room and the bureau and got the wallet. Then he began to exceed his instructions by plundering the house. His accomplice argued the matter with him, and finally induced him to desist from his purpose and start to return. But, when once on the street, he resolved to run away and enjoy the whole of the booty himself. "What's the use going back to divide?" he petulantly asked. Only after another argument and some show of force was he got back to my house. He came in noiselessly, but with triumphant air, and demanded three-quarters of the spoil, which I gave him on the spot—at least, to his satisfaction. He left the bureau open, but locked the doors on leaving. On being restored to himself, he knew nothing of his adventure.

So it seems obvious to me that burglaries at a little distance can be committed under the most favorable circumstances by the employment of an innocent agent, who is quite unconscious of any violation of law or of equity. There are strict limitations to this power of vicarious crime, but the possibility that it may occur should be enough to excite the solicitude of neurologists on the one hand, and the attention of jurists on the other.

One of Charcot's disciples in France, Dr. Luys, has experimented with medicines with hypnotic patients, and has caused much excitement by his proclamation that medicines would operate without being administered at all. He declares that a corked vial of laudanum laid upon a patient's neck induced sleep, although the patient did not know what it was; that a vial of valerian, similarly brought in contact with the person, was followed by deep dejection; that hasheesh caused hilarity and buoyancy, etc. I have repeated these experiments, but do not obtain any of the alleged results. If the responsive does not know what is said to be in the vial, no result whatever follows; and if he knows or believes some particular medicine to be in the vial, and knows the effects which follow the use of that medicine, he will have those external symptoms, whether that medicine be actually there or not. Hypnotic hallucinations are the result of an all-absorbing expectation. If the responsive thinks he is drinking too much whisky, he will become helplessly inebriated; if he thinks he is at sea in a storm, he will be afflicted with violent nausea, enough to convince any skeptic of the genu-

ineness of the emotion; if he thinks he has swallowed laudanum, he will fall into a sleep. How far this delusion will go in physical repairing or impairing, I do not know; but I should not like to give a gum drop to the most sensitive of mesmerized ladies and afterwards tell her that she had swallowed strychnine.

Nine-tenths of the readers of this article will say, "Nobody can mesmerize me!" This is the innocent and foolish prattle of a child in presence of an unknown force. Only experiment can demonstrate whether a particular person can be easily mesmerized or not. If he can be, it implies no weakness of nerves or of brain, no mental or physical inferiority of any sort. If he cannot be, it does not prove strength of intellect or even of will, or the possession of any superior qualities of mind or body.

"How do you know these persons are not deceiving you?" is a question often asked. They might deceive me for a few minutes or an hour, but not for months. In the first place they are not persons who would indulge in such folly. In their normal condition they are quite incapable of the long and elaborate speeches and earnest dramatic performances which they give. They are thrown into cataleptic rigidity, whose genuineness is attested by physicians. While insensitive they are subjected to great pain, which they could not bear in their normal state. They can be made to laugh immoderately or weep at will.

I have seen a young man, while making a speech, deliberately and deeply seared down the hand with a white-hot iron, quite unexpectedly to himself, and he showed no sign of being conscious of it. I have seen a mesmerized man, driven to despair by the suggestions of the operator (Dr. George M. Beard), seize a revolver, which he could not have known was unloaded, utter a frantic prayer, aim the weapon at his heart and fire, dropping to the floor an inert mass. He recovered after a while, but it was a perilous experiment. In a hundred ways I know I am not deceived, and that these phenomena are genuine and all significant.

That they have been so long treated with supercilious derision by the learned, surrendered to traveling showmen and exploiting laymen, neglected even when not rejected, and left to make their way, like the truths of all revelations, by "the mouths of babes and sucklings," is the irony of science and the reproach even of that variegated empiricism which calls itself "the medical profession."

It will be observed that in this paper no attempt has been made to explain the phenomena described. There is a wide domain of psychological life of which we are vaguely cognizant, whose remote frontiers have only just been reached by scientific research. Its soil cannot be analyzed by chemists, or its products weighed with grocer's scales, or its area measured with compass and chain, and if we are ever to know more of the great mysteries which lie within its strange precincts, it must be by means of an earnest and thorough exploration with new methods by scientific men, and a careful collation of observed facts. It is in this spirit and with this hope that I present this chronicle.

W. A. CROFFUT.